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# Shall Islam Rule Africa?



# SHALL ISLAM RULE AFRICA?

BY

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Given by  
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## PREFATORY NOTE.

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The following paper was read before the Baptist Ministers' Conference of Boston and vicinity. It aroused so much interest that a committee was raised at once to secure the publication of the paper in a pamphlet that could be put into the hands of all students for the ministry and of pastors as well. It was believed that the facts herein set forth should be known and pondered by those upon whom specially rests the prosecution of Christian work at home and abroad. It was felt, also, that the presentation of the real nature of the struggle between Christianity and the oppugnant forces of Islamism and paganism, would stimulate Christian men to deeper thought and more earnest endeavor in the present crisis of our Congo Mission. The duty of the committee has been simply clerical. The paper speaks for itself. Mr. Barnes is alone responsible for the statements and inferences in his able and admirable discussion, a responsibility which he cheerfully accepts. The committee desire to express their high appreciation of the writer's earnestness, candor, and thorough diligence in investigation, and heartily commend his work to the candid consideration of Christian men everywhere.

PHILIP S. MOXOM,  
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*Committee.*

BOSTON, March, 1890.

## SHALL ISLAM RULE AFRICA ?

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**T**HE Arabs claim to be the heirs of Abraham through Ishmael. In that case, the two religions which are most widely spread over the face of the earth, are both from the seed of the "Father of the Faithful."

In the East there are Muslims not only in Mongolia, but some fifteen or twenty millions of them in Southern China itself. The two regions in which Islam is propagating itself most rapidly at present by peaceful missionary methods, are the province of Yunan in China, and the Western projection of Africa, one hundred and ten degrees apart east and west. In a slightly different direction, the geography of Islam presents by far the longest unbroken land line of any religion on the globe, over six thousand miles.

It is doubtful if Islam is now gaining on the population of India as fast as some have claimed. But further south in the Malayan archipelago, Islam is making rapid strides, gaining converts from Christian as well as heathen popula-

tions. In 1882 there were in Java 10,913 Muslim schools, with 164,667 pupils; in 1885 there were 16,760 schools, 255,148 pupils, an increase in three years of not less than 55 per cent. In the Malayan peninsula and islands, are thirty million Muslims, sending 15,287 pilgrims to Mecca in 1886. They are not only growing in numbers, but also in religious zeal. The milder type of Islam is being replaced by the more rigid and aggressive.

Four thousand years ago God himself said to Abraham: "Also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed. I will make him a *great nation*." But of the son of the freewoman, He said:—"I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and in thy seed shall *all the nations* of the earth be blessed." "Which things," Paul said, "contain an allegory." We can see that they contain also a literal prediction. For, counting nominal adherents in the whole world, "more are the children of the" free-woman twice over, than the children of the bondwoman.

But, thus far, in winning the great races of mankind, as races, to the God of Abraham, Ishmael has by far the lead of Isaac. Leaving out in both cases slight, sporadic scattering, in solid ethnographic distribution, Islam has greatly surpassed Christianity. The old school text books, following Blumenbach, named five races of mankind, Caucasian, Mongolian, Malayan, Negro and American. For centuries Islam has had a large following in each of these, except the American Indian—Christianity in only one, the Caucasian. Of the more recent classifications of mankind, perhaps the

most widely current is into Aryan, Semitic, Hamitic and Turanian. Islam has great blocks of population in all four of these, Christianity in only one. And the southern branch of that one, even the Aryan race, in one of its two divisions, the Iranian, belongs wholly to Islam, and in the other, the Asiatic Indian, far more to Islam than to Christianity.

This Abrahamic monotheism of such unparalleled propagating power, deserves more considerate attention than it often gets from Christian students. It, at least, is not fair to base our notion of Islam mainly on the "unspeakable Turk." Perhaps the unworthiest work Islam has ever done for mankind has been in Turkey. From Java to Siberia, from Yunan to Liberia, are many types of Islam and spheres of influence.

Whether Africa is to be, as some one has said, "the continent of the twentieth century" or not, it is likely to be the continent of studious attention during the last decade of the nineteenth century. At any rate, it is bound to be, is already beginning to be the arena of a desperate struggle between Islam and Christianity. It is needful to take a calm, if possible unprejudiced, view of the situation. Such a view might be considered a limited study in applied comparative religion; very limited, because the field is so large that a comprehensive review of the forces can be made only by the most rapid glance at —(1), the present extent of the two religions; (2), some of their comparative moral aspects; (3), their radical distinction; and (4), the special conditions of the conflict in Africa.

## I. THE PRESENT EXTENT OF ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY IN AFRICA.

The distance across the continent is the same north and south between Tripolis and Cape Town, and east and west between Cape Verde and Cape Gardafui, some forty-six hundred miles each way. But the Gulf of Guinea sweeps into the middle of the continent from the west so far that it is only about twenty-three hundred miles from its waters, on a line running north of eastward to Massawah the port of Abyssinia on the Red Sea, which has recently come into possession of the Italians. By such a line the continent is divided into two nearly equal portions, the northern or northwestern with its longer diameter lying east and west, and the southern or southeastern with its longer diameter lying north and south. It is as if the continent had been girded in, half-in-two, and looped on to Southern Arabia. The distance from Massawah is almost exactly the same to Cape Verde and to the Cape of Good Hope.

The *northern half* of the continent has, in fact, been attached to the Arabian prophet; all its roads lead to Mecca. By actual count it sends 14,000 pilgrims a year. It consists of three zones. North Africa proper is best known, and longest Islamized. The population of the Mediterranean states of Africa, as given in the Statesman's Year Book, aggregates 18,123,846. The next zone is the Sahara. In the oases of this vast desert region there are hundreds of thousands of people, according to the German statistician Hübner, 2,500,000. With symbolic fitness Islam has long ruled Sahara. Below that the Soudan stretches



clear across the continent and swarms with humanity. Hübner reckons 83,800,000 people in the Soudan. These three zones, which contain considerably more than half the population of the continent, are thoroughly Islamic.

There are some tribes in the Soudan yet clinging to paganism, but they are comparatively insignificant and are fast succumbing. West of the lower Niger is a small region yet largely pagan. But Islam is taking possession of it far more rapidly than Christianity. The city of Abeokuta, exceeded in size on the continent only by Alexandria and Cairo, has a few hundred Christians, but thousands of Muslims. But sixty miles away is another city, Ibadan, of over one hundred thousand population, more largely Muslim than Abeokuta. These towns are less than one hundred miles north of the Guinea coast. Even the English coast city, Lagos, occupied by some of the strongest Christian missionary societies in the world, is becoming Muslim much faster than Christian. In the twenty years between 1865 and 1886 its Muslim population increased from twelve hundred to thirty thousand.

The whole northern half of Africa is as thoroughly Islamic as Turkey or Persia, if not more so. It is by far the largest continuous area on the globe under Islam. There are more Muslims under the government of England in India than under any other single government. But they are only a minor fraction of the population there; while in the northern half of Africa they are the bulk of the population, and are more numerous than in India. From Tounis to Youla, two thousand miles north and south, from Cape

Verde to Suakim, three thousand six hundred west to east, millions of Muslims, though under one government, are all under Muslim governments, and are in one conscious brotherhood of Islam. The number is, of course, variously estimated. A low estimate is fifty millions. Cardinal Lavigerie estimates sixty-five million Muslims for all Africa. If the great authorities are correct as to the total population of the northern lobe of the continent, its Muslim population is over, rather than under, seventy-five millions.

What has evangelical Christianity in this half of the continent? Less than three thousand communicants in Egypt. Hardly enough to number in North Africa. In West Africa are reckoned fifteen thousand Wesleyans and ten thousand in the Church of England. Putting all the items of a dozen organizations together, 35,777 communicants are reckoned in the northern half of Africa. That means an evangelical following of less than two hundred thousands souls. There may be as many more Romanists, making less than half a million Western Christians in all. Compare that with more than fifty million Muslims.

But Islam has made large advances also in the *southern half* of the continent. Starting from Abyssinia, the eastern seaboard is in the hands of Islam for more than two thousand miles, reaching inland some five hundred miles, much of the way. There are believed to be five millions and a half of Muslims in that territory and as many more in the same and adjacent territories who are more or less under the Islamic influence. Thus Islam is the prevailing religion throughout nearly two-thirds of the periphery of the whole

continent. In the remaining third there are two regions of active Islamic propagandism, Mozambique and Cape Colony. In the year 1880, Cape Colony sent one hundred and fifty pilgrims to Mecca. There are mosques in Cape Town and Port Elizabeth, and some proselytes are being made. In a population of only six hundred thousand, thirteen thousand are Muslims.

From Zanzibar, Muslim influence extends westward half-way across the continent. In the now famous kingdom of Uganda, north of Victoria Lake, Islam has much of the time recently held the upper hand, bringing native Christians to the stake by the score, and even an English bishop to martyrdom. How far the Mhadists are at this moment in sway about the head waters of the Nile is not clearly known. They are certainly in possession of the former Equatorial Province. But whether there is to be an effective junction of these Muslims from the North and their brethren from the East Coast or not, Stanley has brought Emin and the last representatives of Christendom from the upper Nile. For eight hundred miles south of Uganda, till you come to the region between the two great lakes Tanganyika and Nyassa, Muslims exert a large influence. Even further south between Lake Nyassa and the Zambesi river, the Maviti natives conduct their funerals with Muslim rites, and the grave is always turned toward Mecca. This is some four hundred miles in the interior, and in crossing the continent from north to south is much more than half way from Massawah to Cape Town. But somewhat northward, twice as far inland, directly west of

Zanzibar, on the Upper Congo itself, not far apart, are two Muslim towns of some ten thousand population each, Nyangwe and Kasongo. In fact, Muslims hold the country for three hundred miles down the river as far as Stanley Falls. In one of Stanley's letters written since he approached the East Coast, he admits that when he went in, three years ago, he did not believe the Congo Free State able to cope with Tippu Tib, or even hold him in check except by a subsidy. Developments coming to light since, make it more evident that the strongest power in the whole Congo basin at this moment is Muslim.

Islam has reached considerably more than half way from the Indian Ocean to the Atlantic. Still further west, southward on the water-parting between the Congo and the Zambesi basins, some of the Lunda people have learned, at least, to use the word "Allah" as an exclamation.

But without reckoning any such, or other millions who are actually somewhat under the influence of Islam, it seems to be within bounds to count five million Muslims south of Abyssinia.

How many Christians are there in this region? Without going into the details of the inquiry, which has been carefully made, there are more than one hundred thousand, probably one hundred and twenty thousand Protestant communicants in the southern wing of the continent, and a Christian population of perhaps seven hundred thousand, thirty thousand of them being Romanists.

The territory for one thousand miles northeast of the Cape of Good Hope, and reaching some five hundred miles

inland, is substantially Christian and Protestant. The two largest religious bodies, however, the Dutch Reformed and the Anglican, are to a painful degree, in the bonds of formalism. The Dutch Boers are intensely Protestant, and highly Calvinistic. But it must be questioned whether their grasp of religion is not more Islamic than Christian. The Portuguese territories of Africa, east and west, present a thin and broken strip of coast under Christian, or rather Romanist, influence. The French and German coasts present still thinner strips, barely touched with Christianity.

In a word, the northern lobe of Africa is covered by Islam, with mere traces of paganism and touches of Christianity. The southern wing of Africa is covered by paganism with a considerable area of Islam in the north, and a considerable area of Christianity in the south.

Our line of division between the northern lobe and the southern wing ran through Abyssinia. Would that Abyssinia could be called a Christian oasis in the surrounding Sahara of Islam. At best it is only an imposing but barren Gibraltar. For more than a millenium, with mountainous stability, it has outweathered the tidal waves of Islam, which have sometimes washed clean over it, notably in the early part of the present century, when Islam on the eve of predominance among the people, was forcibly crushed back. But Christianity there became simply mechanical ages ago. It is as stiff as the volcanic tablelands of its home, which were once in flux with dynamic fire. Likewise the relic of Coptic Christianity in Egypt is

nothing but a dried mummy. There may be four million monophysite Christians in Africa, but so far as shaping the future of the continent is concerned, they might as well be reckoned sarcophagites.

The ancient and populous Christianity of Augustine in North Africa, was annihilated by Islam. But the ancient Christianity of Origen, further east and south, was simply insulated. The little force it had at the time has been all dissipated in the surrounding atmosphere.

Such, in brief, are the history and present status of Islam and Christianity in Africa. Islam has rendered void the Christianity that once reigned from the Pillars of Hercules to the Indian Ocean; and going beyond, has, century by century pushed its way across the Sahara, throughout the Soudan, and down the East Coast, until more than half the continent is in its grasp. The grasp to-day is as fresh, warm and greedy as ever.

Why has Ishmael so outstripped and displaced Isaac in Africa? Why has not the ideal superiority of the child of larger promise been realized on that continent?

## II. WHAT HAVE BEEN SOME OF THE GREAT ELEMENTS OF THE RELATIVE STRENGTH AND WEAKNESS OF ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY DURING THE CENTURIES OF THEIR PARALLEL HISTORY?

1. "*Blood* will tell." Three-fourths of the blood of the children of Ishmael is African blood, since both the wife and the mother of Ishmael were Egyptians. The Nile is the ancestral stream of the children of Ishmael. But when we

remember that not only the Nile, but also the Euphrates, the ancestral stream of the children of Isaac, and afterwards the home of Christian Aryans, has long been a Muslim river, we are compelled to look beyond heredity and race affinity for the chief elements of the problem.

It is a distinguishing mark of human kind that there are forces in it deeper than heredity. Any wide view of history reveals this. Social currents have, times without number, been strong enough to overrun racial currents. In religion, Christianity, Islam and Buddhism all have most of their adherents outside of their birth-races.

Why has not the average Christianity of Christendom for the last twelve hundred years, survived in Africa in place of Islam? How much more fit to survive there, has the average Christianity of Christendom been? Mark the phrase — “the average Christianity of Christendom.”

2. We never hear anything said about Islam without hearing of its *sensualism*. Monogamy is a great individual and social virtue, which Christianity has always and everywhere advocated in distinction from Islam. The Utahs and Oneidas are perhaps not numerous or important enough to compel consideration in such a statement. One is obliged to say, however, “always and everywhere advocated,” rather than practiced. If all the facts were counted, from the days of the first church in Corinth to the present hour in the so-called highest circles of English society, Christianity would have a dismal and difficult record for Islam to match. The claim of Muslims is possibly just, that having a larger circle of licit relations, they have a smaller circle of illicit. Their

standard is low, more Abrahamic than Pauline. In this respect Islam has been better fitted to the tastes than it has to the needs of Africa.

3. As to the allied matter of the *dignity of woman*, Christianity has, as a whole, shown superiority to Islam, but only to a degree and growingly of late. Women are still harnessed, it is said, with beasts of burden in Protestant Christian lands, and but fifty years or so ago, Boston solemnly concluded that it was not best to give any girls the advanced education of a high school, because it would be unsuitable for their sphere in life. But the average tone of Islam has been still nearer to African ideas.

4. Again, it seems clear enough to us that Christianity favors *political liberty*, and that Islam promotes despotism. But taking the centuries together in Christendom, what has been the prevailing form of government from Constantine to the present Czar of Russia?

5. Again, Islam is always criticised (and must be justly), for *propagating religion by the sword*. But under the same head come the Romish Inquisition and the Puritan's lashing of the flesh from the back of Obadiah Holmes in Boston. In a comparison on this point, what Muslim could forget the Crusades, in which the so-called Christians showed at least their full share of inhumanity?

Religious and political motives have often been fearfully mixed. From the days of Muhammed, Muslims have looked for a second advent in righteousness, when the cimeter should hew a pathway for the Qur'an throughout the world. The latest irruption of Muslim adventists or



Mahdists is one of the greatest which has ever occurred, and it is in Africa. It has gathered sufficient strength to successfully defy not only Egypt but England. It has conquered region after region, till it holds sway over a million square miles.

One cannot read the long letter recently sent by one of its Generals to Emin Pasha, without believing that there is an honest religious element of great strength in the movement. Whole paragraphs of the letter might have been copied in one of our yesterday's sermons without suggesting plagiarism from a Muslim. The congregation might only have thought that their pastor was in an unusually earnest and tender mood, and that they were, in unwonted measure, being spiritually fed. The whole document sounds more like a homily than like a summons to surrender. Take a single sentence :

“So now we have come in three steamers and in sandals and nuggers [other boats] filled with soldiers from God's army under our orders, sent to you from his Mightiness the Great Chief of all the Muslims, the ever-victorious in his religion, who relies on God the Lord of the world, the Khalifa, the Mahdi — may God be gracious unto him! — with his sacred orders, which are the orders of God and His Prophet, and it is your duty to obey them *by reason of their religious teaching*, you and whoever may be with you, whether Muslims, Christians or others, and we bring you such news as will insure your welfare in this world and in the next, and to tell you what God wishes, He and His Prophet, and to assure you of a free pardon, to you and to whomsoever is with you, and protection for your children and property, from God and His Prophet, on condition that you submit to God.”

This letter just received and published in England, shows that to-day, as of old, Islam is being propagated in Africa by the military as well as by the missionary methods. But by the same methods, it must be remembered, was Christianity first propagated in a large part of Christendom.

Central Europe was converted by the sword to Christianity as truly as Central Asia or Africa has been to Islam if not more truly. It took Charles the Great thirty years to convert the Saxons with the sword. Islam gives three alternatives, Islam, tribute or the sword. Christianity give but two, baptism or the sword. Recall "the massacre of the Saxon captives at Verden to the number, it is said, of four thousand five hundred." It was not Charles only who did it, or the Saxons only who were thus evangelized, but with tribe after tribe, and nation after nation the work went on for centuries, until Teutons and Slavs were all brought to the cross at the point of the sword. In the thirteenth century, after years of military subjugation to Christianity in Prussia, heathenism took an opportunity to revolt, and then for twenty-two years more "no quarter was shown to any remnant of heathenism. At last, bathed in blood, the country surrendered an undivided allegiance to Christianity, as personified by the Teutonic Knights."

Everywhere bayonet religion is bad. Still, most men are likely to regard it as a blessing to Europe and the world, that paganism was displaced and the land of Luther made Christian. It is not wholly wild to think that military monotheism may be better for Africa than anarchistic fetichism.

6. *Treatment of native races.* Again, it is greatly to the moral detriment of Islam that it regards with haughty contempt and treats with brutality natives who refuse the Qur'an. But the Boers of South Africa, colonists of largely Huguenot blood, compelled generations ago to adopt the language of their Dutch rulers at the time, and amalgamating with them, have for two centuries maintained a rigid, Calvinistic Protestantism. Multiplying greatly, they have spread over vast territories. Everywhere they have carried the Bible and enthroned it. Often it has been the only book in their huge wagon trains, and is even yet almost the only literature which the bulk of them know. But for two hundred years they have ruthlessly ridden over every right of the natives. They have seized their territories, reduced the people when possible to serfdom, when that was impossible have hunted them like wild beasts, and literally shot them on sight like game. They have not tried to bring them to Christianity. It is doubtful whether in Africa or elsewhere, Muslims have ever matched these two centuries of fierce contempt for unconverted aborigines.

In fact, one chief advantage which Islam has in Africa over Christianity, is the greater spirit of fraternity which it shows to the natives. Even our most zealous evangelical missions treat them as inferior beings; are, in fact, organized and conducted on that basis. Our Aryan blood recoils from too close contact. We gladly, with unstinted devotion, condescend, but cannot fraternize. The Semitic Arab, with a large strain of his ancestral blood African to start with, has found it possible to identify himself with Africans

as we never have. As soon as a Negro is Islamised, every position is open to him in the home, in the mosque and in the state, not in theory only, but in free, actual, universally accepted fact. In India, Africa, and everywhere with Muslims, there is but one caste and that caste is Islam.

7. But at this point we must consider the heaviest count against Islam in Africa, viz: *the slave-trade*. Muslims have, in some cases, discouraged the conversion of natives to Islam because they could no longer enslave them. The horrors of African slave catching, driving and killing, are undoubtedly beyond the power of exaggeration. Populous and thriving communities are every year being blotted out with unspeakable butcheries. Notwithstanding the fact that the Sultan of Zanzibar has made every slave who may be brought into his dominions thereby free, and every slave's child born there from January 1, 1890 onward free, still, in the interior, Muslims are engaged in a desperate struggle to drive out the English and Scotch missionaries, who obstruct the traffic. All this has a vital bearing on the future. But it has not much weight against Islam as compared with Christianity in the past history of Africa. For centuries the most Christian and liberty-loving nations held a monopoly of the trade on the West Coast, and prosecuted it with every enormity.

If tribes become Muslims, they are no longer subject to slave raids. It is recorded that in the thirteenth century in Germany, "within the territories which" the knightly missionaries "commanded, baptism was literally the solitary passport to freedom. The convert might indeed call

himself a free man as soon as the baptismal waters had bedewed him, without further impediment. But the pagan, who, fondly clasping his ancient idols to his heart, refused to be baptized, was a mere item among his master's goods and chattels."

This alternative which Christianity gave in Europe and which Islam still gives in Africa, Christianity did not give in Africa. It even sometimes professed to enslave Negroes in order to make them Christians.

8. We considered at first one great virtue which Christianity has always advocated in contrast with Islam. But on the other hand, there is one great virtue which Islam has always advocated in contrast with Christianity. It is *total abstinence* from intoxicating drinks. There is now advocacy of that rule among many Christians. Among some Muslims there is said to be relaxation of it at present. But, taken as a whole, Islam has been, and continues to be, grandly abstinent in drink, while Christendom has been, and continues to be, terribly intemperate. In Damascus drunkards are called victims of the "English disease."

It is quite possible, as some Christian observers on the ground think, that the liquors of Christendom are to-day more destructive of life and happiness in Africa than the Muslim slave traffic. Muslims have recently held an Anti-rum-trade Congress at Khartoum, and planned stringent measures to exclude it from the whole continent. Looking at Northern Africa alone, it looks as if the native tribes would, in the end, be absolutely besotted by the drink traffic from Christendom, were it not for the restraining hand of Islam.

In Southern Africa, however, are some independent native peoples who have come under the sway of an evangelical Christianity which is redeeming them from alcohol, the only enemy they have had worse than the Boers. The capital of the Bechuanna Kingdom of Mangwatos, was till recently Shoshong, a city of twenty thousand people, and probably more free from intemperance than any city of its size in Europe or America. The penalty enforced by the king for selling liquor in the Mangwato Kingdom, is, for a European, five hundred dollars; and for a native, banishment.

9. Viewed in general as to *civilization*, the ancient Christian civilization of North Africa was doubtless supplanted by a lower Muslim civilization. The probability, however, is not great that Christianity, if left there, would have much better results to show now than Islam has. The state of society in Abyssinia cannot be ranked above that in Muslim countries. There is practically free divorce; lying is a national vice; constant war and plunder are the occupation of the dominant classes. The slight abatement from unlettered ignorance is of about the same kind as that among Muslims. In addition to a great army of begging monks, the haughty Abyssinians are as a people, beggars. With some of them it is even the custom to be buried with one hand projecting from the grave in supplication for a gift.

On the other hand, in the very heart of the Soudan, about Lake Tsad, is a Muslim civilization in the Kingdom of Bornu, higher, if anything, than that of Abyssinia. Kuka, the capital, has over fifty thousand population, shows a

variety of European goods in its markets, possesses a valuable library, and is a center of actual culture. Timbuctu has a still larger library. Kano, in the great Haussa Empire, is a walled city covering ten square miles within walls. Within the past twenty years, heathen peoples on the Upper Niger have been converted to Islam, and transformed into at least semi-civilized nations. It is true that in some districts they are first persuaded at the muzzle of guns. But as the sword of Charlemagne in Germany was immediately followed up by zealous missionaries, so is the sword of Islam in West Africa. Schools are planted, the Qur'an is taught, and even some other Arabic literature, and mosques are built. The most significant fact is that the work, both of the sword and of the book, is done, not by Arabs, but by West Africans themselves.

10. *Devoutness.* In some districts the sword stage of the process is omitted. A Muslim goes into a pagan community for two purposes, to trade and to make proselytes. His superior intelligence and cultivation win the wonder and then the following of his fellow-blacks. They adopt the religion which has done so much for him. He becomes the medicine-man, the magnate of the village. The old fetich: —

“ Eye of newt, and toe of frog,  
 Wool of bat, and tongue of dog,  
 Adder's fork, and blind worm's sting,  
 Lizard's leg, and owlet's wing,  
 For a charm of powerful trouble,”

is replaced by some texts of the Qur'an. Those mysterious Arabic letters have a witchery over the mind more

literary, if not more spiritual than the former fetich. But after all, they do learn to pray to the God of Abraham, and with a devotion as earnest, perhaps as intelligent as many of Abraham's own Bedouin household.

A glimpse of both the lower and the higher aspects of West African Islam is given in the March Missionary Review of the World, just at hand. It is a mere paragraph translated from a French Protestant missionary at St. Louis, a coast town just north of the westernmost cape of the continent, under French control, but inhabited principally by Muslim Negroes. But it would be hard to find in half a dozen sentences a more graphic and widely representative picture. "You see them pass in the streets, furnished with enormous rosaries, which they are telling in a very absent-minded manner. Then women, babies at the breast, all are loaded with gre-grees (amulets), enclosing fragments of the Qur'an, which, it appears, possess marvellous properties. Then when the hour of prayer is called, at the corners of the streets, on the square, and chiefly along the river, you perceive files of natives bending to the ground, like a thicket of reeds before a breeze. Take care not to enter one of their shops at this hour, for, in the very middle of your purchases, you would see the merchant leave his business in the lurch and begin his interminable genuflexions, your objections not being of the slightest avail. You needs must summon up your best patience, or walk off, until his salaam is at an end."

On the confines of Liberia are boys but sixteen years of age, who can repeat the whole Qur'an from memory. It



would be hard to match them in Bible-praising Protestant Christendom with boys who know even a single book of the Christian Scriptures thus.

Islam has gone to the Negroes with a simple creed and a primitive form of civilization, vastly above the aboriginal, but not so high or complicated as to seem out of reach. It has evidently had elements of great strength in Africa in contrast with paganism, even, in some particulars, in comparison with nominal Christianity.

In order to be fully fair, it has been necessary to take only the *average Christianity of Christendom in past centuries* compared with the average attainments of Islam.

After all, it would not be fair to leave the subject here, for the average Christianity of Christendom is not, strictly speaking, Christianity at all. The majority of people in Christendom are not Christians any more than the majority of animals are men. A few observances, for the most part wholesome observances, make a man a good Muslim. If something like that, only of a different form and more elaborate, made men Christians, would it be worth the turn of a thumb to put Christianity into Africa instead of Islam?

### III. BUT THE RADICAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM REMAINS TO BE CONSIDERED.

The deepest, most significant reality about a religion is its moral content, the force it lays hold of in man, the element of his being which it actuates; or rather, as a cult is worthy of the name of religion only in proportion as it lays hold of the will, the radical fact about a religion is the way in which it grapples with the human will.

Perhaps the religions we are considering are the two highest. At any rate the stress of both is at the will, but in radically different ways. The key-word of the one religion is "islam." The key-word of the other religion is "faith." The word islam means submission, — faith means reliance. Islam is resignation, — faith is aspiration. Islam is surrender, — faith is laying hold. Islam is the obedience of fear, — faith is the obedience of love.

There is no such characteristic difference between Islam and the Faith, so-called, of average Christendom from the days of Muhammed onward, especially in the regions where they have stood side by side for the twelve hundred years. Oriental Christianity is more islamic than Islam itself. Nor does the characteristic difference exist between Islam and Romanism. The ground tone of the two is the same; the difference is in technique. The psychologic intent of Muslims and Romanists is the same, the difference being in phraseology. The contents of the *volition* are alike. It is only the mechanism of *thought* which essentially differs. Morally there is no contrast worth while. There is the same being in a different dress. In a portion of Protestantism, not small, there is more of islam than of faith. On the other hand Islam has not been altogether devoid of faith. Along the frontiers of Islam's advance over the world, there has generally been a decided tinge of faith, and so of power. But between Islam and Faith, genuine Islam and genuine Faith, Qur'anic Islam and New Testament Faith, the contrast is real and radical. The one is prostration, — the other is confidence. One is a compulsion, — the other is an impulsion.

In Islam practical religion consists of five observances: Creed recital, prayer, fasting, almsgiving and pilgrimage. Islam, Romanism and Rationalism, agree on the method of salvation — do duties, and trust the mercy of God to overlook deficiencies. They know not the elixir of life, the *vitality of God* introduced into the human circulation. To Islam and Rationalism, God on the cross is an intolerable absurdity. The cross in Romanism has become a mere magician's wand, a stick to conjure with. Blood injected, life penetrating life, God's moral force reinforcing man's — this is the glad-tidings which Islam has refused, Romanism has lost, and Rationalism is too unknowing to accept. The latest English champion of Islam, and advocate of fusion between Islam and Christianity, admits that there is one point of so-far hopeless hostility, namely, the cross. The incarnation, involving the crucifixion and the present work of the Holy Spirit, is the abhorrence of Islam. Islam seems to make much of the will of God, and does of an external will of God. But its thought is of submission to the will of God and not of suffusion with the will of God.

This root difference between Islam and Faith characterizes the scriptures of the two. One is oracular, the other inspired. The one is supposed to have been created in heaven and let down in the course of a few years to one man, as finished dicta. The other is believed to have been divinely breathed through human souls into human society, during a millenium and a half of human history.

The same radical difference between Islam and Faith, is concrete in the authors of the two. One was mastered by

his mission, the other was Master of His mission. One was the highest offspring of heredity, the other was the Progenitor of a new heredity. One was a marvellous resultant of environment, the other was a fresh initial Force. One was the consummate flower of his age, the other was the potential Seed of ages to come. The one struck twelve to start with, the other started an endless progression. The moments of the loftiest spiritual power Islam has ever had, were the first, before the prophet fled from Mecca. The moments of the loftiest spiritual power Christianity has yet had are the present.

Muhammed tottered and finally reeled under the burden of his mission. Christ carried the awful weight of His mission as if He had been accustomed to it from eternity. Muhammed acted as if the Spirit of the Almighty had fallen upon a man. Christ acted as if the Spirit of the Almighty had entered into a man. And these different states are exactly what each claimed for himself.

In Islam God has approached and borne down upon mankind. In Faith God has united with and borne mankind upward with Himself. The founders of the two religions are not regarded by their most devoted followers in the same light. Islam is not, does not call itself, and does not wish to be called, Muhammedanism. Faith is, calls itself, and wishes to be called, Christianity.

In general the fruits correspond to the roots. The result of Islam is stagnation, — the result of Faith is progression. Islam causes atrophy, — Faith causes development. There is one refrain on the lips of Muslims

always: "There is no God but God, and Muhammed is the apostle of God." Their thought is of the arbitrary, fixed, *mechanical*; three characteristic words of Christianity, are "Faith," "Christ," "Life." They speak of that which is *dynamic*.

Islam is indefinitely in advance of fetichism, but its utmost development is easily and soon reached. From that time on, there is a dead level. Wherever faith has been revived in Christianity, and to the extent of its revival, there has been movement, expansion, growth. Compare Egypt, Turkey and Persia with Germany, England and the United States.

#### IV. THERE ARE SOME SPECIAL CONDITIONS OF THE CONFLICT BETWEEN ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY IN AFRICA.

Islam is the only great religion which is in extended geographical contact with Christianity. It lies between Christendom and the other great religious territories of mankind. But from the beginning it has been in contact with the most degenerate forms of Christianity. In its early days Islam gained repeated, wide, and permanent victories over Christianity, but it was a Christianity more mechanical, less dynamic than Islam. It was at the fag-ends of Christianity, left behind in the onward march of Christian life and power. Evangelical missionary forces sent back to struggle with Islam in the Orient have to be, in Muslim thought, identified with an established type of Christianity which is manifestly inferior to Islam.

But the forces of genuine Christian faith are to be, are already being, thrown into the newly opened regions of middle Africa. Toward these same regions Islam has long been pushing its front. Now, after twelve hundred years of contact, for the first time Islam and Faith are to meet face to face for a trial of strength on a fair field. For the first time, also, it is to be purely a trial of *moral* strength. The European Powers will not long leave Islam to propagate itself by gunpowder in the Great Lakes region. The Congo Free State is already guaranteed religious liberty. These two regions span the continent. If Islam moves further southward in Africa, it will be because it has moral power for conquest.

Again, the conditions are altogether different here from those in India or China, where Islam and Christianity have to contend with established, highly cultivated, literary religions, which so far hold their own, and are even making more converts from the remaining aboriginal tribes, than either Islam or Christianity are. But in Central Africa the unlettered, unorganized fetichism is sure to yield, and that rapidly, to one or the other of the noble monotheisms which are about to attack it.

It is sometimes said that aboriginal races are sure to disappear before higher types. But history shows that that is not the actual fiat of evolution. There is an alternative. They may be annihilated. But, instead of that, they may assimilate the vital principles of the higher type and survive.

For example, though often asserted, it is by no means proved that the American Indians are diminishing in numbers. The first complete census of aboriginal Americans is

to be taken in 1890. There are some facts which seem to indicate that they have long been increasing instead of diminishing in numbers. And it is said that more than ten per cent. of them are church members. At any rate, of the Indians in the Indian Territory, a larger proportion are Protestant church members than of the population of New York City or of Boston. The red aborigines of America may yet have to send missionaries of pure Christianity to the Caucasians of New England. In the Indian Territory one out of every twelve is a member of a Baptist church; in Massachusetts, one out of every thirty-six. The Puritans, like many of their descendants, thought the aborigines doomed Canaanites. The first Protestant missionary to the Indians was Roger Williams. One of the official charges on which he was banished from Massachusetts, was his championship of Indian rights. To-day baptized Christians are relatively three times more numerous in the Indian Territory than in Massachusetts.

There are said to be three hundred and fifty thousand native *adherents* of Christianity south of the Zambesi river in Africa. But that is about one in ten of the total native population. Some districts are as much Christianized as Europe, and the aboriginal population is multiplying.

The interest of the competition between Islam and Christianity in Africa, is intensified for the student of comparative religion, by the fact that the contest has now reached a point where it begins to be for a new race of men. Islam has captured Nigritia; but there is much land in Africa besides Negroland.

Some phases of African Ethnology are in no end of dispute. But all agree that south of the Soudan, or land of the Blacks, nearly down to the Cape of Good Hope, there are many tribes, but all of one allied race, now commonly called the Bantu race. Their language is prefixional in its inflections, and very elaborate in some respects; yet so clear that it is generally spoken with great grammatical accuracy. The Bantus are a far nobler type of men than the Negroes. There are probably seventy-five millions of them. The bulk of their territory is in the region of more than twenty inches of rainfall, *i. e.* in the region of natural cultivation. The Great Lakes, larger than our North American lakes, the Zambesi river and the Congo river with its lately discovered immense branches, are all of them already navigated by steam. The interior steam-navigation shore line is longer than the sea-coast around the entire continent.

The Bantu race of men, so situated, is the prize which now lies open between Islam and Faith in Africa. Islam has a considerable following in the northeast, and Christianity perhaps an equal following in the south among the Bantu people. The battle is now set. Which is likely to win? One or the other substantially before 1950.

Wealthy Muslims in Constantinople are contributing money to push Islam in this territory. Islam has a great school of its prophets already planted on the contested continent, which can supply men in almost unlimited numbers. The Muslim school, "El Azhar," in Cairo, is as old as Oxford. Its principal building, "Gamah el Azhar," or



Splendid Mosque, covers two acres of ground, and is supported by three hundred and eighty choice columns from ancient Egyptian temples and churches. In 1882 one of the teachers spoke of forty-five thousand students. But according to the lowest estimates, there are about ten thousand students. The Egyptian Minister of Education gave the number in 1872, as nine thousand six hundred and sixty-eight. In 1875, Georg Ebers gave the number as eleven thousand one hundred. The students range from six to fifty years of age. They spend from five to fifteen years in the school. That long course is devoted mostly to drill in the Qur'an, its commentaries, and Muslim theology; although law, mathematics, grammar, syntax and rhetoric are also taught. The official enumeration gave three hundred and fourteen teachers. Its students come from all parts of the Muslim world, though naturally more from the contiguous regions. Suppose that only one-half of the ten thousand students remain to propagate Islam in Africa; suppose that four-fifths of these are absorbed in the northern lobe of the continent. Still, if it chooses, in the next five or ten years, Islam will have, at least, a thousand of its best trained men to spare for mid-African conquest. Protestant Christendom reports exactly one hundred and fifty men sent thither at the present time, with ninety-five native evangelists.

But Islam does not depend on specially trained and employed men. Every Muslim is a missionary. When we remember that Islam has not to be imported across oceans, but is already massive in that continent, and that it has

advanced its front lines down upon the central regions with unbroken ranks behind, it is evident that Christianity must soon adopt measures of unwonted vigor or the battle will be lost in mid-Africa, as it was long ago in North Africa, and more recently in the Soudan.

At present outlook, on the thin picket line of Scotch and Anglican church missionaries in the Lake regions, and of English and American Baptist missionaries in the Congo region, is coming, if not the greatest, one of the most significant religious conflicts of the world,— a conflict for a continent.

The bugle of God's providence calls to immediate action.

Whether Islam is to be the religion of Africa — the rest of Africa — or not, depends as much on the response of the young business men and students who are members of our churches at the present hour as on any other equal number of men on the globe.

Of Isaac, instead of Ishmael, God's promise still holds, when the old condition is fulfilled. “Thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, **because thou hast obeyed My voice.**”